Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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POLICY ANALYSIS

Policy orientations for food security resilience with gender sensitivity in the Gambia

Motivation, objectives and data

Resilience to food insecurity has become an essential technical and evidence-based policy instrument for better-tailoring development and humanitarian intervention designs. Despite the humanitarian and development scope of household resilience strengthening, most resilience academic research and policies focused on countries in protracted crises. In addition, too little attention has been paid to in-depth analysis of gender inequalities in household resilience capacity to food security/insecurity. This study was carried out to help fill the gap by using the Gambia case.

This brief summarizes the results and policy orientations presented in a report of the analysis of gender gaps in resilience capacity and food security indexes at national, urban and rural levels in the Gambia.

The study relies on 13 281 households' data from the Gambian Integrated Household Surveys on consumption expenditure and poverty-level assessment 2015–2016.

Evidence

The analysis finds strong contributions of the adaptive capacity and asset accumulation pillars to building the resilience capacity of both male- and female-headed households in urban and rural areas in the Gambia. Therefore, these two pillars remain the most critical short-term strategies to strengthen female- and male-headed household resilience capacity to cope with shocks and climate risks in urban and rural areas.

KEY MESSAGES

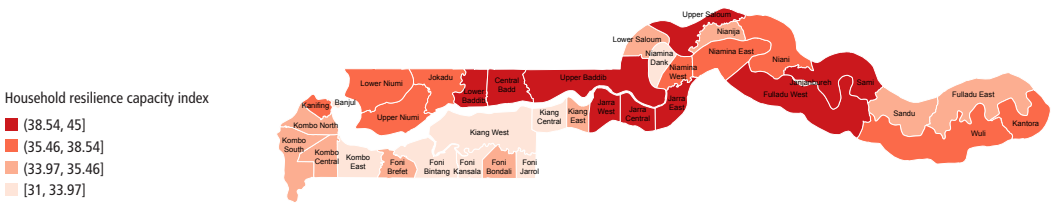
- Female-headed households are significantly less resilient than male-headed households both at the national level and in the rural areas in the Gambia.
- For female-headed households, crops and income diversification, land size, livestock and agricultural productive resources, are crucial to enhancing resilience capacity and food security and reducing the gender gap in the Gambia.

Moreover, layering interventions that meet immediate needs such as social safety nets and access to basic services with those that address longer-term resilience issues (productive assets accumulation and households' adaptive capacities development) are essential to improving households' resilience capacity and food security in the Gambia.

Furthermore, the analysis highlighted that closeness to food market, access to electricity and improved toilet, participation in associations, agricultural and non-agriculture wealth indexes, agricultural land (ha), tropical livestock unit, household-head years of education, crops and income sources diversification indexes, and women participation in household decision-making are the most important factors that affect household resilience capacity in the Gambia.

Figure 1 suggests that the districts of Foni Kansala, Foni Jarrol, Kiang West, Niamina Dankunku, King Central, Janjanbureh,

FIGURE 1. Resilience capacity index (0–100) mapping by district



Source: United Nations Geospatial. 2020. Gambia [shapefiles]. New York, USA, United Nations, modified by the author.

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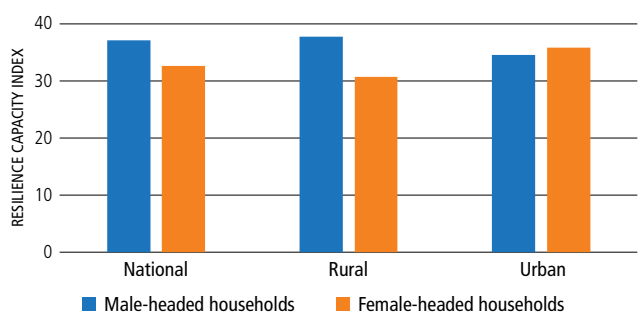
Kombo East, Foni Bintang Karanai and Foni Brefet are showing lower level of resilience. Simultaneously, Sami, Central Badibu, Lower Faladu West, Lower Badibu, Jarra East, Upper Baddibu, Jarra Central and Upper are the most resilient districts.

Food insecurity and resilience capacity at national, rural and urban levels

Analysis revealed that, in the Gambia, female-headed households are 12.40 percent less resilient than male-headed ones. On the other hand, analysis findings indicate that female-headed households in rural areas are 20.33 percent less resilient than their male counterparts while in urban areas, female-headed households are also less resilient than male-headed households, but with a smaller margin of 6.85 percent. A main difference is that urban female-headed households tend to have a significantly more diverse diet than male-headed households, while in rural areas, the diet diversification gender gap is in favour of male-headed households. This gender-gap in rural areas is explained by the endowment effect, i.e. by the gender differences in the means levels of assets, access to basic services, social safety nets and adaptive capacity covariates (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. Resilience capacity index by sex of household head



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Resilience capacity index and food security indicators decomposition show that the endowment effect is more important than the structural effect in rural areas. Indeed male-headed households processed productive assets (wealth, agricultural wealth, land, livestock, etc.) and developed more adaptive capacity (crop diversification and income source diversification), consequently making them more resilient and food secure compared to those headed by women. In addition, the findings indicate that improving governance (household participation, awareness and implementing inclusive development policies and programme; and participation of women in the community development committee) and increasing women's participation in household, community and policy decision-making processes enhances household diet diversification, food consumption and resilience capacity.

Rural households are less resilient and more food insecure than urban households. However, household member participation in child growth programs significantly affects household dietary diversification.

The analysis shows a positive association between household resilience capacity index and income and crop diversification indexes. Globally, findings support that crop diversification; income diversification; women empowerment; accumulation of productive assets including land, livestock and agricultural wealth; household size and household-head age are the key contributors of resilience and food security gender gaps mostly in rural areas in the Gambia.

Policy implications/recommendations

- The Gambian Government and its development partners should focus their investments on improving access to productive assets, training programs to educate smallholders on good agricultural practices, technologies adoption, and the importance of crops diversification as the best strategy for climate risks management.
- Interventions in the Gambia that support socioeconomic and climate resilience, livelihood and food security improvement must be designed in a gender-sensitive way, considering the different needs and opportunities for male and female-headed households, as well as the differences between urban and rural households. Female-headed households – especially in rural areas in the Gambia – need to be supported with packages of support that meet a range of needs to balance their resilience capacities, focusing on access to productive resources, crops diversification, income sources diversification and business and vocational training. Meanwhile, while men are more endowed with assets and participation in decision-making processes, their households have markedly less diversified diets, which is an essential factor in food security and increasing resilience.
- Evidence suggests that, in the Gambia, supporting rural households' awareness of climate change adaption and tailoring the best adaptive strategies to cope with climate risks would improve food security and resilience capacity of vulnerable households' specifically female-headed households.
- Therefore, the design of the rural resilience to food insecurity development strategy in the Gambia should emphasize on households' productive assets accumulation and adaptive capacity building. This strategy should consider access to basic services (e.g. improved water, electricity, improved toilet, agricultural and livestock markets); shocks-related social safety nets to strengthen rural households' resilience capacity. That, with a particular emphasis on the least resilient districts, and the reduction of inequalities in access to productive resources, in resilience capacity and food security between female- and male-headed households.

CONTACTS

Agrifood Economics Division – Economic and Social Development
ESA-Director@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy

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